

CHARLIE CRAWFORD

BROADBAND CHAMPION INTERVIEW



Meet Broadband Champion, Charlie Crawford, President of the Harrison County Commissioners. Learn from Commissioner Crawford about Harrison County's experience in becoming certified through the Broadband Ready Communities Program.

“The Harrison County Commissioners, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce of Harrison County, Connect Harrison County, Inc., Harrison County EDC, Harrison County Community Foundation and other elected officials, have dedicated years and substantial investment to expand broadband internet infrastructure throughout rural Harrison County. The Broadband Ready Communities certification, through the Indiana Broadband Office, is a logical step in attracting various internet service providers to help fill the remaining gap in services in our most rural of communities. This certification, along with the soon to be released broadband ready and infrastructure deployment plan being developed by the Chamber and Community Foundation, will help attract and encourage investment in this critical utility in Harrison County.” — *Commissioner Charlie Crawford*

What does it mean to you to be a Broadband Ready Community?

CC: “Becoming a Broadband Ready Community means that Harrison County understands the importance of broadband infrastructure and the critical need for additional expansion so that every household and business, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to high-speed internet.”

How has access to broadband improved your community?

CC: “Since 2013 the Harrison County Commissioners, with the support of the Harrison County Council and in collaboration with the Harrison County Community Foundation, have provided over \$5 million in funding for broadband fiber optic backbone that has been utilized to expand the last mile of services that our households and businesses have been requesting. Although access was available before, speed and reliability have drastically improved. In 2008, download speeds of 2 Mbps would have been acceptable in Harrison County. Today, we wouldn't consider anything below 25 Mbps, and that is becoming obsolete.”

What is the most pivotal piece of information about the process of becoming a Broadband Ready Community that you would share with another community?

CC: “Planning, planning, planning. Don’t throw money at the issue of broadband infrastructure development without an in-depth survey/study of your community and the development of a plan first. Without a roadmap for development, it is easy to get lost and spend lots of precious resources (time and money) without actually effecting change.”

What advice would you give to other communities who wish to expand their broadband access?

CC: “Start by surveying your community to determine what needs exist, what services and providers currently exist and develop a plan of where you need to go.”

What are your next steps as a Broadband Ready Community?

CC: “The Chamber of Commerce of Harrison County and Harrison County Community Foundation are in the process of developing a broadband plan they commissioned Ice Miller to research and author. When that plan is finished, project areas will be identified and requests for information will be issued to try and gain the interest of internet service providers. At the same time, community conversations about potential incentives to build out those project areas will be discussed.”

What does your community hope to accomplish with this access to broadband?

CC: “Eventually, we’d like to boast that 100% of all households and businesses have access to a minimum level of broadband if they desire the service. Increasing our taxpayer base is important to our sustainability and broadband will help us grow our community.”